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ABSTRACT

After a brief description of some historical and cultural interchanges between Ireland and Austria, the paper examines Irish fiction that has been translated into German and Irish plays that have been performed in Vienna over the past 25 years. The paper also describes German translations of Irish children's fiction, including classics like Gulliver's Travels, Celtic and Irish tales, and the works of Eilis Dillion, Tom McCaughren, Martin Waddell, Joan Lindgard, and other Irish writers. The paper also describes children's books in the German language that focus on Ireland. (KRN)

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Irish Literature in Austria

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Irish Literature and Austria

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me tell you what a pleasure and honour it is for me to be here and to talk to you because I love Ireland and I love literature.

Before talking about Irish literature and Austria in particular I would like to show what connections there are between Ireland and Austria, apart perhaps from Aer Lingus or other travel agencies. I will then turn to fiction and drama and will also include some aspects of children's literature.

Preparing my topic "Irish literature and Austria" was a pleasant time for me indeed because whenever I mentioned "Ireland" to people everybody responded warmly with a nostalgic smile. Austrians can satisfy a little bit of their desire for some continental Irishness with regular ceilidh sessions in Vienna, Gaelic language courses, Irish dancing courses, and evening courses in Irish literature are attended by all age groups.

This cannot just be due to a stereoptype tourist image of Ireland as a sort of cooler Arcadia. I believe it is also due to cultural links that we are not always aware of, but that certainly exist and cannot be denied.

* There is a common Celtic heritage that Austria shares with Ireland. I dare not talk much about the Celts to an Irish audience, of course, as this would mean carrying coal to Newcastle. Just let me mention that a lot of Celtic customs have survived in Austria, especially in the Alps, but unlike in Ireland, not much of the Celtic language. However, it left its traces in numerous Austrian field-names, names of rivers and place names. The names of our capital Vienna and the river Danube, for instance, are derived from Celtic.

* Apart from such loose linguistic links there are far more direct historical connections between Ireland and Austria. These are the foundations of monasteries by the Irish monks.

There was for instance Saint Virgil, who became bishop of Salzburg and after his canonization in 1233 Saint Virgil became one of the patron saints of Salzburg.

For another Irish monk, Columban, his Irish origin was of tragic consequence.

On his pilgrimage to the Holy Country, his strange language, Gaelic, and his foreign way to dress made him suspicious. He was taken for a spy and executed in 1012 at a place called Stockerau near Vienna. So you may call him the first victim of the Gaelic language. After his canonization he was worshipped as patron saint of Lower Austria and Vienna until 1663. You can see his tomb in the monastery of Melk, one of the two Benedictine monasteries along the Danube which were originally founded by Irish monks in the 11th century.

There is a church in Vienna called "Schottenkirche", which was also an Irish foundation of the 12th century, when Irish monks were called from Regensburg to Vienna.Its name goes back to the fact that at that time Ireland was called "Scotia maior". Today the monastery of Schottenkirche also runs a boys' boarding school of high standard, called Schottengymnasium. On St. Patrick's Day the monks of Schottenkirche remember their "Irish roots" with a special festival service.

But not only such spiritual church affairs, even one of Vienna's popular worldly tourist attractions got its name from an Irish monk. I mean the horse cabs, called "Fiaker", in which tourists like to be taken round the city. The name of these horse cabs goes back to the year 1650 and to a mural on a house in Paris depicting the Irish St. Fiacrius. This house, a hospital or a hotel, is said to have been the first "agency", so to say, to rent hackneys. In Austria "Fiaker" later became the name of such Austrian horse cabs or their drivers. St. Fiacrius is the patron saint of gardeners. He is said to save you from various illnesses and delicate complaints, such as haemorrhoids, by the way, for which the colloquial French expression is "mal de Saint Fiacre".

* Finally, let me briefly mention the Wild Geese, who form perhaps a less peaceful but nevertheless memorable link with Irish and Austian history. From the 17th century on they fought not only in Spanish and French armies, but also in Austrian regiments. Irish generals assisted the Austrian Emperor against the Turks during the 2nd Turkish Siege in 1683. They also commanded the regiments of Empress Maria Thereresia in the Seven Years' War. In our Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt there hang quite a few portaits of Austria's Wild Geese who established their reputation Austria's military history.

* When I think of Austrians who lived in Ireland there is the philosopher Wittgenstein who comes to my mind. He spent the summer of 1948 in a cottage at the mouth of Kilary Port in Rosro, Connemara. Wittgenstein, with whom, I must confess, the average Austrian is not very familiar, seems to be better-known to some local Irish people. It happened to my husband some years ago on a pub crawl in Galway that an old man, understanding that he was talking to an Austrian, insisted on discussing Wittgenstein with him. After several pints of Guiness, however, this turned out to be a difficult job for both of them.

Of course we Austrians are also still proud of the fact that when James Joyce went to live in Italy, Triest was part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

But mentioning James Joyce, I would now like to turn to Irish literature.

• The questions I aksed myself were: How familiar is the average Austrian reader with Irish literature? What kind of contemporary Irish fiction or drama is regarded representative of Ireland by publishers so that it would be translated into German? What kind of Irish drama is performed on our stages and how well known is Ireland in our children's literature?

• Since the Austrian book market depends to a large degree on Germany, I will not only refer to Austrian publications of Irish authors. Unfortunately, as concerns contemporary Irish authors, there are only two. Namely Tom McCaughren with his wildlife books, published by Jugend & Volk, and Martin Waddell with "Can't you sleep, little bear" and "Let's go home, little bear" published by Annette Betz Verlag. By Irish literature in Austria I understand all publications of Irish literature as they are available in Austria. These are books in German translations as well as books in the English language.

• Let me turn to the originals first. Though the majority of readers in Austria gets acquainted with foreign literature through translations, there are also people in Austria who rather read the original English versions instead of translations, either for professional reasons or for their studies or as their hobby.

Among these books "Across the Barricades", "My Left Foot" and "Cal" are the favourites at the moment. Joan Lingard is regarded as an Irish author, and "Across the Barricades" belongs to the de facto standard curriculum of English at secondary schools. Obviously film adaptations are also responsible for the success of books like "Cal", "My Left Foot", or also "Ulysses" or "The Dead". Particularly the film "My Left Foot" seems to be very popular with young people.

Last winter there was also an increasing demand for the works of Brian Friel, which is obviously due to lectures on contemporary Irish literature at the University of Vienna.

Unfortunately one must be very patient when ordering Irish publications from Austria. Copies ordered in small quantities are either comparatively expensive or take an awfully long time. So booksellers often advise you to wait for a British paperback edition or you take a long booklist with you on your next Ireland holiday. In a way it is a paradoxical situation. The more Irish publishing is developing, the more complicated it is occasionally in Austria to get hold of Irish books.

• As concerns translations into German, all the Irish literary classics are of course available. But Irish literature is often still understood and classified as Commonwealth literature, as is done for example in the German standard reference work on international literature, Kindlers Literaturlexikon. In addition, many Irish authors have their books printed in Britain and translations usually run as "translations from English", not Irish English. So readers or booksellers cannot always distinguish between English ~~or~~ and Irish authors.

In addition, it must be said that among the host of books that are produced every year Irish literature plays only a minor role, although booksellers generally observe an increasing interest in it on the part of the readers. While James Joyce, with" Ulysses" and "Dubliners", is the Irish long-time bestselling author, Flann O'Brien is a new cult author, published by Haffmanns Verlag, who recently also brought out new translations of "Tristram Shandy" and "An Ideal Husband".

The tremendous popularity of Flann O'Brien with insiders, especially of "Thirst" and "At Swim-Two -Birds", is certainly due to the initiative of Harry Rowohlt, who also translated James Joyce, Anthony Burgess and "Winnie the Pooh".

Rowohlt is a special character: About two years ago, for example, in order to promote his translation of "At-Swim-Two-Birds", he gave a highly acclaimed non-stop reading performance in Vienna, lasting about 20 hours. Last autumn he played a role in his own stage adaptation of "At-Swim-Two-Birds". It was performed in a derelict coffin factory in Vienna and was so popular that it was booked out for three weeks in advance and had to be prolonged for another fortnight.

There are also other publishers who offer a wide range of Irish authors, such as Diogenes of Switzerland, for example, who publishes Laurence Sterne, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Oscar Wilde, Sean O'Casey, Liam O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor, Edna O´Brien, Brian Moore, Bernard MacLaverty, a James Joyce anthology and several anthologies of Irish short stories.

I think, a person who must not be overlooked in this context is Heinrich Böll, not only because his "Ein irisches Tagebuch" (An Irish Diary) initiated an Ireland boom on the continent.

Böll deserves special mentioning not only as a translator of the works of Sean O'Casey, Brendan Behan, Liam O'Flaherty for instance, but also of the English version of Tom O'Crohan's "Islandman" into German, which recently saw its 3rd new edition.

As to translations of contemporary Irish fiction, I find that the nineties have been a particularly productive period. For example, Diogenes-publishers did not only continue their programme of Irish classics in new editions or new translations, they also systematically focus on contemporary authors.

One of them is Brian Moore. After "Catholics", translated in 1978, there followed a break of 11 years, but since 1989 eight more titles, including "Judith Hearne", have been brought out, most of them immediately after their original publications.

There is Bernard MacLaverty with "Lamb", "Cal", and "Secrets". "A Time to Dance" was published just a few weeks ago.

Also Christopher Nolan's "Under the Eye of the Clock" was brought out very soon in German, and Christy Brown's "My Left Foot" was reprinted in 1990.

In addition, there is John Banville's "Book of Evidence" of 1989, which was translated in 1991. It received an excellent review in the Austrian newspaper "Die Presse".

And John McGahern's "Amongst Women" was published both in English and in German even within the same year. His "The Pornographer" is planned next.

I do not want just to list work after work, let me just mention one more title that struck me for a special reason:

Among all these translations the German publication of John B. Keane's "Letter's of an Irish Parish Priest", which also came out in German last year, is the only one that does not say "translated from English", but "translated from Irish English".

I may be exaggerating, but in a way this seems to me to reveal a new attitude: It stresses that Irish literature is no longer Commonwealth literature.

These modern works of fiction are, of course, to be understood and read against their special Irish background, I would say. But they do not, apart from "Cal" perhaps, focus specifically on the Troubles. Nor are they historical novels. I feel they are not read because the average readers want to read them because of the Troubles but because they just want to read good literature in the first place. No matter whether it is political or not. - It struck me, for instance, that in my local district library where average working class people would borrow books, "The lonely passion of Judith Hearne" is read much more frequently than "Cal", although the English version of "Cal" sells quite well.

As concerns poetry, one can really not speak of a boom with Seamus Heaney obviously being the only contemporary poet represented. But similarly to modern fiction, also Heaney's poems were translated in the 90's, "Government of the Tongue" came out just recently in spring.

I would say, one cannot overlook an increasing focussing of German publishers on Irish contemporary fiction. What I personally miss among these publications, however, is literature by Irish women.

At present you get only few works of Edna O'Brien, only few reprints of Eilís Dillon's books (apart from some of her children's books), at present you do not get Julia O`Faolain, Jennifer Johnston or Mary Lavin, Meta Maine Reid, there are none of Lingard's adult novels available, no Polly Devlin, Maeve Binchy, Nelly MacCafferty or Una Troy, just to mention a few. There were quite a few translations of some of these women writers in the 60's and 70's, but they have not been reprinted. If you want to read these you have to rely on second-hand bookshops or on public libraries, where several of them have their loyal fans.

Although modern women writers are included in short story collections or in anthologies like "Frauen in Irland" (Women in Ireland), I found no new editions and no collected works of Irish women writers.

Let me now turn to the theatre.

I was also interested in Irish plays on our stages, so I checked the programmes of Vienna's theatres of the last 25 years.

Various plays of G. B. Shaw and Oscar Wilde, as well as Sean O'Casey and Samuel Beckett have frequently been performed on various stages in Vienna. In the 70's there was also Joyce's "Exiles" on the programme and an adaptation of "Stephen Dedalus" by Hugh Leonard. J. M. Synge's "Playboy of the Western World" or Brendan Behan's "Hostage" were performed by smaller experimental stages.

By the way, we are proud of having two theatres in Vienna that perform plays exclusively in English throughout the yearand 80 percent of their audience are local people. In 1972 Vienna's English Theatre produced Brian Friel's "Lovers" and in 1980 Abbey Theatre players performed Sean O'Casey's "The Shadow of a Gunman".

In addition to these classics, one of our theatres, "Volkstheater" (People's Theatre) and its experimental studio responded to political issues of the time. It was not only a production of "Juno and the Paycock" that drew attention to Irish history. There also was Brian Friel's "Freedom of the City" in 1977, and in 1986 they brought out the first German production of "Tea in a China Cup" by the Belfast writer Christina Reid.

In addition, they also did "Flashpoint" by the British writer Tom Kempinsky in

1989, which had already been performed in Linz, Upper Austria, two years before. Though it is not an Irish play I would like to mention it in this context as it deals with the British army in Northern Ireland, and because it has been broadcast twice on Austrian TV.

The leaflets that went with these plays all contained well-written outlines of modern Irish history, and authentic background material to the Troubles offered useful explanations of the political situation to the average audience.

With those productions the theatre tried to respond to that situation, and as venue of lively discussion it met an interested audience in events of their time.

However, I found no other contemporary Irish plays on our programmes that, similar to Irish fiction, would cover other topics than political ones. There would be George Bernard Shaw or Oscar WIlde, or Sean O'Casey's "The End of the Beginning", written 55 years ago, which was on the programme last spring. But there are no recent contemporary playwrights performed in Austria.

Our audience is not familiar with playwrights such as, let's say, Thomas Kilroy and Tom Murphy, or John B. Keane, and hardly any of the works of Brian Friel are known in Austria.

Let me now turn to children's literature.

In Austria as well as elsewhere books like "Gulliver's Travels", or stories like "The Happy Prince", "The Selfish Giant" or "Canterville Ghost" have become classics and have been translated and illustrated numerous times. You may know the beautiful edition of "Canterville Ghost" published by the Salzburg publishing house Neugebauer Press, with the sensitive illustrations by the prize-winning Austrian illustrator Lisbeth Zwerger.

Austrian children can also choose among a wide range of Celtic and Irish tales for different age groups. There are numerous anthologies of Celtic tales available, quite a few edited by Frederik Hetman, an expert in Celtic mythology. But the present Celtic wave that is sweeping over Austria from Germany seems to attract rather adult than young readers. When I checked the children's departments of public libraries in Vienna I made out only few borrowings of Celtic tales, whereas academic or bibliophilic editions that clearly aim at adult readers have been reprinted several times in the last few years.

Although a lot of Eilís Dillon's books were translated already in the 60's, several of them by Heinrich Böll, contemporary Irish children's fiction is hardly represented on the German bookmarket. Last year 371 children's books were published in Austria, 65 of them were translations. 46 of these were translations from the English, but only one had an Irish author, namely Waddell's "Let's go home, little bear". And only two years ago our International Institute of Children's Literature in Vienna could not even give me information on a single Irish children's writer. Later I discovered that they did have several English copies of books by Patricia Lynch, Eilis Dillon and Martin Waddell in their archives. But since these books were British publications, their authors were not identified as Irish.

Similarly, the German standard reference book on children's literature, the Lexikon der Kinder-und Jugendliteratur, edited by Klaus Doderer in 1984, you find the essay on Ireland by Ellen Power not under the letter "I" between Iran and Israel, but in the supplementary volume. In addition, a mistake in the German translation of this essay turns Eilís Dillon into a male writer. The dead-line of that encyclopedia being 1976, it naturally contains no information on recent children's fiction.

Eilís Dillon is one of the few contemporary Irish writers whose children's books have been translated into German. Others are Tom McCaughren, Martin Waddell and I also include Joan Lingard, who as the author of the Kevin and Sadie books counts as an Irish writer.

Quite a few works of Eilís Dillon were translated by Heinrich and Annemarie Böll already in the sixties and published by Herder, who also have a branch in Vienna. At present, of her children's fiction, "The Lost Island", "Island of the Horses", and "The Shadow of Vesuvius" are available in new publications and republications, partly in paperback editions. Nine other ones, including "The Cruise of Santa Maria", and "The Seals", all translated and published in the 60's, have not been reprinted.
I can only speculate about the reasons for this. Perhaps the traditional adventure story has lost its attraction when wild islands lie within easy reach from the airports and TV provides even more exciting adventures with a switch of the button. It might also be that adventure stories for individualists are not desirable in a society that demands the conformity of young consumers.

Two of Tom McCaughren's wildlife books, one of which was on the list of the "White Ravens", found an Austrian publisher, Jugend & Volk. They are also included in the programme of our "Austrian Book Club", whose members can get certain recommended books cheaper. However, McCaughren's historical novels or "Rainbows of the Moon" are not yet available in German.

Also Martin Waddell is no longer a stranger in Austria. I am happy that the Austrian publishing house Annette Betz that specializes in picture books, edited "Can't you sleep, little bear" in 1988 and "Let's go home, little bear" in 1991. The latter was awarded the Austrian State Prize for Children's Literature just recently in April. "Sam Vole and his brothers" (I hope this is the correct title) is planned for next year. Perhaps these Austrian activities make up a bit for the fact that hardly anybody in Austria knows Waddell as Catherine Sefton although she won "The Other Award" for "Starry Night" and should be known to German and Austrian publishers. I do wish the recogniton and popularity of Waddell might convince our publishers also of the literary merits of Catherine Sefton.
I am optimistic, though, that Catherine Sefton will soon be better known at least among Austrian teachers of English. Last year a team of English teachers brought

out a booklet called "77 Young Adult Novels", intended to encourage the use of teenage fiction in the English classroom. This brochure includes reviews of Sefton's "Ireland-trilogy" and also of Joan Lingard's "Guilty Party".
In addition, the same team has also produced an excellent English coursebook for secondary schools, with reading tips after each unit. The unit on Ireland in the last volume for students in their last year recommends for further reading not only Brendan Behan, Brian Friel, James Joyce, Bernard MacLaverty, Flann O'Brien, Frank O'Connor, but also Tom McCaughrens "Rainbows of the Moon" and Catherine Sefton's Ulster Trilogy. So, although to my mind the German bookmarket ignores Irish juvenile literature too much, at least a light wind of change seems to be blowing in our schoolbooks.

The best known Irish juvenile book in Austria is Joan Lingard's "Across the Barricades". The first three volumes of the Kevin and Sadie books are available in German, also in paper back editions. Altogether, nine more of her books have been translated, including "Strangers in the House" and "The Guilty Party".
These two books were presented just recently in May and June, in a very successful Austrian children's and teenagers' programme, called "Fortsetzung folgt nicht" (= "not to be continued"). In this series, which is also broadcast in Germany and Switzerland, the beginning or some crucial scenes of a book are acted out, partly by amateur actors, but the ending is not revealed. If you want to know that, you must read the book yourself. This is the only Austrian teenage programme for book reviews and it provides successful promotion for the respective books. There is quite a competition among publishing houses to have their books included in this show as it helps to sell more copies of the specific books than are sold before Christmas. The School Library Service Centre in Vienna lends the video tapes to teachers who want to introduce ~~one of~~ these books to their classes. I am mentioning all this as it shows that the mass media need not necessarily distract from reading but may also support it.

It was the books of Joan Lingard that made me interested in Ulster children's fiction. I do know meanwhile that there are quite a few books focussing on the political situation of Ireland, written and published both in Ireland and in Britain. Several ones have not been translated into German, or like the "The Deserter" by Nigel Gray were translated very soon but have not been reprinted. But this does not mean that Northern Ireland has not been a topic in Austrian or German children's

literature. I found that, similar to our theatres, Northern Ireland was a topic of various German juvenile books already in the 70's and 80's, several years before Joan Lingard's books were edited in German (1986), and years before Sefton's Ulster Trilogy (1986 - 19889) was written for McCaughren's "Rainbows of the Moon" (1989) or "Stan" (1988) by Ann Pilling, for instance. Those were books by German writers, some were documentary reports on Northern Irish children in crossfire, another one was by an Austrian, there was even a translation from the Dutch. The latter is meanwhile out of print, together with other ones that were perhaps either too didactic or too one-sided or that focussed to my mind too explicitly on violence and militant aspects.

Apart from Joan Lingard's books,there are two quite different books on Northern Ireland that are successful on the German and Austrian market, namely "London, 13. Juli" by Käthe Recheis and "Lorcan zieht in den Krieg" by Frederik Hetman.

Käthe Recheis is one of Austria's most prominent and highly respected children's writers. "London. 13. Juli", written in 1975, won the Austrian State Prize and the Prize of the City of Vienna and has been reprinted numerous times.
Its setting is not even Ireland, but the London of 1939, which one really forgets while reading. Sadly enough, it might as well be the London of 1992. The action takes place within a few days. The main figure is 15-year-old Noreen, daughter of Irish immigrants. She meets two Irish youths and suddenly gets involved in IRA activities and becomes a witness of IRA terrorism in London.
The girl's father, hoping in vain that his daughter might never get involved in violence, never touched upon Irish history. However, he has to face the facts and is forced to explain things to her. Though Irish, Noreen is not much familiar with the Irish background and shares the limited range of experience and what I would like to call the "tourist-approach" of the young Austrian reader who also knows only little about Irish history, and together with Noreen the reader learns to understand what's going on and why.
The book does not give an insight into everyday life in Ireland, but the author explains to her readers how violence became a political instrument in the course of Irish history and that, although the picture of violence may change, the roots are still there. At the same time she makes clear that, once let loose, terrorism follows its own rules and can't solve problems.
Such an approach from outside or transferring the problem to another country

seems to be a technique that lends itself to political teenage fiction.

"Lorcan zieht in den Krieg" by Frederik Hetman, written in the same year, 1977, won the Swiss "La Vache qui lit" award and saw a new edition in 1989.
Not approaching from outside, this book is set in Donegal and combines motives of adventurous fiction with the military activities of the IRA.
Lorcan, 13-year-old son of a boastful IRA activist, is fascinated by the glamour of power of his boastful father. He decides also to become such a hero and together with his faithful friend from a tinker family he goes north to look for his father and join him in order to fight for the "case". Living in a world of heroic fantasies, the two boys resemble Don Quixotte and Sancho Pansa rather than genuine heroes. Disillusioned with the unheroic activities of his father Lorcan finally returns home as a different person and is done with false heroism and war. What was fantastically intended as going to war becomes a true conversion to peace.
Authentic descriptions of the landscape of Donegal reveal the author to be an expert on Ireland, and some original Irish legends that are woven into the story might make think the reader it was written by an Irish author. Also this book does not really portray Irish everyday life. In spite of its historical, sort of militant tales, it is almost a pacifist fantasy, with the adventures taking place in the boy's imagination. In the afterword to the second edition of 1989 the author wants it to be understood as a warning against the dangerous fascination of power and violence and as a general challenge to peace addressing all countries

Käthe Recheis, Frederik Hetman and Joan Lingard have emerged as the Ireland authorities on the German market. This means that there is no book on Northern Ireland available at the moment that was written by a writer who was born and still lives in Ireland or Northern Ireland.
In addition, the sad fact that the political situation in Ireland won't be solved in the near future makes it easy for publishers to put Ireland aside for a while and to turn to other important topics. So for example Peter Carter's novel on Eastern Germany, "Bury the Dead" was translated just in time before the fall of the Berlin wall, whereas there is still no German edition of his Belfast novel "Under Goliath", written much earlier in 1977. Obviously publishers feel sure that the Ulster problem will not be outdated too soon.

Meanwhile not only the recent rapid developments just across our borders and in

Eastern Europe have changed the scenery and the topics of German juvenile fiction. There has for example also been an increasing interest in Latin America or in environmental issues, or in topics that used to be explicit taboos in children's fiction only a few years ago. It is not my task here to answer the question whether or not this breaking of taboos in children's literature is in favour of the child or in favour of the bookmarket. ~~But~~ Anyway, this change in topics and interest might perhaps account for the absence of more recent books from Ireland in Austria.

But we do have few children's books written in German that are set in Ireland and that are not political. One of the early books of Käthe Recheis, "Martys irischer Sommer", (Marty's Irish summer), which was reprinted in spring, does not focus on political events, but is the story of a family crisis during a journey through Ireland.

Then there is a new edition of a book called "Jenseits von Aran" (On the other side of Aran) by Arnulf Zitelmann, a writer of various historical adventure novels for children. It deals with the Celtic kings of Old Ireland of about 400 A.D.

And recently I came across a lovely and funny book for younger children, "Die Windwette" (The wind bet. Published byThienemann, 1991) with the landscape of Connemara as a background. It is about a rabbit, not about the Troubles and provides a very warm impression of Ireland, although it does not have an Irish but a German author, Sigrid Heuck, who is a fan of Ireland.
I do not want to make a mountain out of a molehill, but I do wish these German and Austrian books, together with those of Eilís Dillon, Tom McCaughren, Martin Waddell or Joan Lingard, or even the recommendation of Tom O'Crohan's "The Islandman" in the juvenile fiction section of "Die Zeit", might indicate a new readiness for children's books with an Irish background, but why shouldn't they be by Irish authors?

Conclusion

Summing up briefly, I would say that as far as the theatre is concerned, we have not only had a wide range of productions of classical Irish writers such as Shaw, Wilde, Behan, Synge, 0'Casey. Plays produced in the 80's also served as a platform to deal with political issues of Ireland. However, apart from these, there are no contemporary plays performed on the Austrian stage at the moment or plays that would reflect new trends in modern Irish drama.

As concerns fiction, the outstanding celebrities are James Joyce and Flann O'Brien. Writers of modern Irish fiction are better known in Austria than modern Irish playwrights, and independently of political issues, they are accepted on the bookmarket and appreciated by the readers. I do feel, though, that women writers are less represented at the moment than some years ago.

As to modern Irish children's literature, I regret that there is too little awareness of its existence in my country, although Ireland serves as a background of several German and Austrian children's book.

I do wish, therefore, that a conference like this might contribute to giving Irish children`s fiction more recognition in the future, not only in our English classrooms but also on the shelves of our bookshops.
I thank you very much for your attention.